FORMATION OF HIRAKHAND
OR
KOSHAL PROVINCE

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Historical Background.—The Sambalpur tract forms part of the *Dakshina Koshal* region which is better known as Koshal in modern history. This area is a compact block in the high land portion of Orissa and comprises the States of Bonai, Gangpur, Bamra, Rairakhol, Raigarh, Sarangarh, Sakti, Athmallik, Baudh, Sonepur, Patna, Kalahandi and Bastar, and the District of Sambalpur at present in Orissa including Borasambar and Khariar Zamindaries, and the Zamindaries of Phuljhar, Deori and Bindra Nawagarh which are at present in the Raipur District of Central Provinces. The whole of this tract is culturally homogeneous, where the dialect known as Sambalpuri is spoken. It has also got historical, traditional, social and other affinities which bind the people together in a common bond and mark them separate from the other areas of Orissa. From the Vedic period onwards, Koshal has gone through many vicissitudes. It has seen periods of unity and disintegration, prosperity and adversity, as well as rise and fall of Empires. In various periods of history, strong kings and emperors have arisen, who not only united Koshal but extended

their sway over the coastal areas of Orissa and the eastern parts of Central Provinces as well. The Sambalpur tract occupies the central part of Koshal and by virtue of its geographical position it has been the solar plexus of Koshal from where the initiative for unity and progress has always come. When the prosperous age of the *Suryavanshis*, *Airas*, *Koshal Guptas* and *Gangavanshis* had passed, in the beginning of the 13th Century A.D., Koshal had been divided up into many States and the nerve centre of Koshal—the Sambalpur tract—was itself divided into smaller States. At this time a movement for reunity started from the heart of Koshal in the Sambalpur tract. First, the eight *garhs* ruled by one Mullick each started the process of union by combining into one State called Patna. A crude method of centralised administration was tried by this confederation of eight *garhs*, whereby the Mullick of each *garh* ruled the State for a day each by turns and the sovereign authority was a golden lemon placed on the throne as a symbol of Unity and Prosperity. At this period, Ramai Deo, descendant of the illustrious Prithwiraj Chauhan, appeared on the scene and supplied the need of a strong centralised government by combining the eight *garhs* into the single State of Patna. Thenceforward, the process of reunity of Koshal proceeded apace. Ultimately the major portion of Koshal was brought into the *Atharagarh Confederacy* in the next few generations, and at times the whole of Koshal as well as other neighbouring States were brought under one Empire, the glory of which has been sung by the poet in the Sanskrit work known as *Kosalanand Kavya*. The *Atharagarh Confederacy* lasted till the advent of the British when

it was broken up in A.D. 1818, though the final disintegration did not take place till A.D. 1867.

Peculiarities of Evolution of Koshal Union.—The peculiarities of Koshal Unity were the preservation of local autonomy and centralisation of common subjects. This trend is noticeable from the confederation of the eight *garhs* of Patna up to the *Atharagarh Confederacy*, where a large sphere of autonomy of the member States was preserved and only common defence was centralised. The evolutionary trend of Koshal has always been towards confederation. The same trend is noticeable even now in the proposal of the Eastern States Federation. The major portion of Koshal lies within the Eastern States. There is now a move for forming a bigger union with centralisation of common subjects. While formerly needs of common administration were few, with growth and progress and the complexities of modern life the need for centralising more subjects has naturally been felt. The move for a Federation is therefore on the right lines and is in accordance with natural evolutionary trends.

Move for Forming Administrative Units of Cultural Homogeneous Areas.—It is universally recognised nowadays that the boundaries of the existing administrative units of India have been haphazardly drawn. As different parts of India came under British rule at different times, areas were placed under different administrations purely on grounds of administrative convenience of the time. The result was that cultural homogeneous areas were divided and placed under different administrations. Thus

though the *Atharagarh Confederacy* was broken up in A.D. 1818, and though the five zamindaries were separated from Patna in 1826 and Sambalpur lapsed to the British in 1849, the whole area continued to be under N.W.F. Agency at Ranchi and continued to be treated as States till 1864. It was in that year that different areas were transferred under different provinces and the close unity of the tract was broken up. This is admitted by every one to be unscientific. With constitutional changes looming large in the Indian horizon and with the bright prospects of Indian independence, people of different regions are thinking and planning for reforming administrative units on cultural homogeneity. Attempts are now being made for the formation of Andhra, Kerala, Karnatak, Maharastra, Bundelkhand and Delhi Provinces. It is time that the people of Koshal took up the question of Koshal Union.

Koshal Union or Eastern States Federation.—On the analogy of the *Atharagarh Confederacy*, whose logical conclusion would have been the confederation of all Koshal States, it may be considered an ideal to form a Koshal Federation on strict grounds of cultural homogeneity. On the other hand there are affinities of the Koshal States with other states of the Eastern States Agency, and most of these States also formed part of the Koshal Empires at different periods in history. It would, therefore, be advantageous to form a bigger union of these States which would be comparable to a province in size, population and resources. Moreover, in course of time, if the natural evolutionary processes had not been artificially checked

during the British period, there is no doubt that other neighbouring States would have been drawn into the *Atharagarh Confederacy*. The greater advantages to component units in a bigger group naturally lead us to give preference to the idea of a bigger union of all Eastern States.

Problem of Sambalpur Tract.—The Sambalpur tract, which consists of Patna, Sambalpur, Sonepur, Khariar, Borasambar, Phuljhar, Deori and Bindra Nawagarh, is part of Koshal and in fact the heart of Koshal. Of these, Patna and Sonepur are at present in the Eastern States along with all the other Koshal States ; Sambalpur, Khariar and Borasambar are in the Sambalpur District of Orissa, and Phuljhar, Deori and Bindra Nawagarh are in the Raipur District of Chhattisgarh Division in the Central Provinces. Patna and Sonepur of this tract naturally will go into the Eastern States Federation along with the other Koshal States. Thus, the major portion of Koshal will be united in the States Federation. The question is, how to bring the rest of the Sambalpur tract, which is at present in British India, into the States Federation to complete Koshal Unity. Historically and traditionally this tract is States' territory. Sambalpur itself was a State till 1849 (less than a century ago), and has not yet lost its traditions of a separate State. Similarly, Khariar, Borasambar, Bindra Nawagarh, Phuljhar and Deori were parts of Patna State till 1826 and were separate States till 1867 and have close traditional and other affinities with Patna. When there is a move to create new Provinces of Andhra, Kerala and Maharastra, etc., and boundaries of provinces will be revised for the

purpose, for the sake of justice and Koshal Unity, the areas of the Sambalpur tract should come into the States Federation.

Constitutional and Legal Methods of Achieving the End.—Sambalpur was a grant to a younger brother by the Maharaja of Patna. In accordance with family custom and the law of the land, Sambalpur should either have reverted to the parent State of Patna or to have continued as a separate State under a member of the Patna-Sambalpur Chauhan family. But it lapsed to the British Government under Lord Dalhousie's immoral Policy of Annexation. The moral and constitutional grounds of Sambalpur's claim for separate existence still exist. There is no question of limitation in political matters and revision of boundaries of States take place even after centuries. The lapse or annexation of Sambalpur was an Act of State on the part of a superior power, *i.e.*, the British Government. Sambalpur may have been content with the arrangement so long on the ground that sovereignty of the area vested in the British Government. Now, however, the British Government have declared their intention to transfer their sovereignty to India and to the Provinces. They have also declared that Paramountcy exercised by them will revert to the Indian States. There is, therefore, no reason why Sambalpur should acquiesce in transferring its sovereignty to Orissa or any other Province. The people of Sambalpur having already decided to separate from Orissa Province, and being desirous of entering the Eastern States Union on the ground of natural affinities and for Koshal Unity, are certainly

entitled to claim their right of self-determination. Any possible objection that small areas or districts should not be allowed the right of self-determination cannot be tenable in the case of Sambalpur. Sambalpur would certainly have possessed that right like any other State, if it had continued as a State till now. The action of the British Government which changed the status of Sambalpur from a State to that of a district, against the custom and law of the land and against the wishes of its people, should not be allowed to deprive the people of Sambalpur of their inherent right of self-determination. Moreover, denial of the right of self-determination to small areas or districts may be sound on the ground of their being uneconomic administrative units, if such areas were to exercise such right for complete independence or separate existence. In the present case Sambalpur has no such intention, for it will not only remain an integral part of the Indian Union, but it wishes to enter the Eastern States Federation which will be a sound unit of the Indian Union and with which it has natural affinities and with which it will form a compact administrative unit.

Similarly, the five Zamindaries of this tract were part of Patna State till A.D. 1826 and were separate States till A.D. 1867. Their natural affinities also lie with Koshal and the Eastern States Union. The decision of the British Government to transfer sovereignty raises the same questions in their case too, as in the case of Sambalpur. Once the right of self-determination is admitted for the people of these areas, the legal and constitutional means of their

entry into the Eastern States Union will not be a matter difficult of solution. There should be no objection to the Sambalpur tract remaining a centrally administered area of the Eastern States Union wherein its geographical position would entitle Sambalpur to be the capital of the said union. The object can be achieved by making a concerted move and representation to the British Government as well as by representatives of Sambalpur moving the matter in the Constituent Assembly. Education of local public opinion in favour of this move in the Sambalpur tract, counter-propaganda against the proposal of amalgamating the Orissa States with Orissa Province and propaganda in favour of Koshal Union through the Eastern States Federation in the States, as well as efforts to gain support and sympathy of other Indian leaders should be simultaneously undertaken to strengthen the case and chances of success.

Solution of Oriya Problem.—The 23 States at present in the Orissa States Political Agency are purely Oriya-speaking States. Mayurbhanj in the Bengal Agency is also a purely Oriya-speaking State. Patna and Kalahandi of the Chhattisgarh Agency are also purely Oriya-speaking States, while Bastar of the same Agency is predominantly a Oriya-speaking State, its Oriya population being more than double of the Hindi-speaking population. Out of the other Chhattisgarh States, Sakti, Sarangarh and Raigarh are partially Oriya-speaking and have long intimate connection with Sambalpur and the other Koshal States having from the beginning been members of the *Atharagarh Confederacy*. Similarly there is a fair percentage of

Oriyas of Sambalpur in the interior of Surguja State and a fairly high percentage of Oriya-speaking population in Udaipur and Jashpur States of the Chhattisgarh Agency. Thus, it will be seen that out of the 40 States of the Eastern States Agency, which are expected to join the Eastern States Union, 26 States are purely Oriya-speaking, one is predominantly Oriya-speaking in comparison to its Hindi-speaking population, 6 are partially Oriya-speaking, and only 6 States are predominantly Hindi-speaking. The percentage of Oriya-speaking population for all the Chhattisgarh States is as high as 30 per cent. from which it will be clear that there is no prospect of bringing together all the Oriya-speaking population except through the Eastern States Union. The other Oriya areas of the Sambalpur tract, of which mention has been made before, have traditional and natural affinities with the Eastern States and geographically they form a compact block with the Eastern States. From the point of view of cultural homogeneity, administrative convenience and of regional planning and economic development, the Sambalpur tract should form one unit with the Eastern States Union. By the joining of this tract with the Eastern States Union the outlying Oriya tracts of the western part of the high lands will be brought under one compact union and a common central administration and thus solve the vexed question of the outlying Oriya areas of this part of the country.

Objections to Orissa States Federating with Chhattisgarh States Frivolous.—The disadvantages of combination of unequal partners, which gives chance

of exploitation of the weak by the strong, and differences of history, tradition and outlook, naturally make the majority of the States' people, as well as the rulers, averse to the proposal of amalgamating the States with Orissa. There are, however, some interested persons in coastal Orissa and a few States' people under their influence, who would like to prevent the States' Union, in order that their scheme of amalgamation might have some chance of success. The advantages of a States' Union consisting of States with similar administrative systems and of people with similar traditions and outlook are so obvious, that these interested persons are hard put to find flaws in the scheme. Therefore, they have started a propaganda based on objections of a sentimental nature. The first objection urged against the proposed union is that it will perpetuate feudalism and give chance to the rulers to avoid transfer of powers to the people. The hollowness of this objection will be apparent from the fact that all the States have accepted the Chancellor's declaration in the Chamber of Princes regarding internal reforms in the States and the Special Committee of Rulers of the Eastern States has recommended "Responsible Government" as the goal of the Eastern States Union. There is not the least doubt that the rulers intend to move with the times and that nothing can prevent the march of democracy in the States and that ultimately there will be fully popular legislatures and executives not only at the centre but in the component States' units as well. The second objection urged against the proposed States Union is that there will be harmful Hindi minority in a predominantly Oriya States Union. It will be

seen from what has been said in the previous paragraph that 34 States out of 40 are predominantly or partially Oriya-speaking and only 6 are Hindi-speaking and 30 per cent. of the population of the Chhattisgarh States is Oriya-speaking. The Oriyas have always claimed the outlying Oriya areas of Bindra Nawagarh, Phuljhar and Deori, where there are a fairly high percentage of Hindi-speaking population. Similarly, the Oriyas have shown an interest in Bastar State, which has not only a Hindi minority but also a Marathi majority population. Moreover, nobody would ever suggest that the Oriya population in Sakti, Sarangarh, Raigarh, Udaipur, Jashpur and Surguja should be left out of an Oriya administrative unit, simply because they have got some Hindi-speaking population. If we are prepared to accept not only the Hindi-speaking populations of these States, and Bindra Nawagarh, Phuljhar and Deori, but also the Hindi as well as Marathi-speaking elements of Bastar State, there appears to be no valid reasons for objecting to have the Hindi-speaking population of the 6 other Chhattisgarh States in the Union. One cannot have the loaf and eat it too. Either the Eastern States Union embraces all the Chhattisgarh States or the Oriya population of those States would for ever be left out of the Union. It would be pertinent in his connection to point out that the Gond, Binjhal, Agharia and Kulta population of many of the Koshal States have greater affinity with their tribes and caste people in Chhattisgarh than with the people of coastal Orissa, though it is also true that the population of the Koshal States generally have lesser affinities with the people of the coastal plains than with those of Chhattisgarh. It

may not also be out of place to point out that the objection to linguistic minorities loses all its force in a federal type of union, where the component units retain some amount of local autonomy. The successful working of the Governments of Canada (French and English-speaking populations) and of Switzerland (French, German, Italian and Swiss-speaking populations) should remove any misapprehensions on the point. In our own Indian Union also there will be different linguistic component units. Above all, the hollowness and sentimental nature of the objection would be apparent from the fact that the critics who are raising objections regarding Chhattisgarhi Hindi population being a harmful minority, are prepared to join Orissa which has not one but two harmful minorities in the domiciled Bengalees and Andhras who are already presenting a problem to that Province. The objection of these critics becomes all the more absurd when we find that they aspire to take Singhbhum with Bihari Hindi and Bengali populations into Orissa.

Conclusion.—The advantages of the Eastern States union for the people of these States, for Koshal unity and also for bringing together a large block of Oriya population under a common central administration are obvious. By the inclusion of the rest of the Sambalpur tract in this union, Koshal unity will be completed and the vexed question of the outlying Oriya areas solved to a large extent. There is a saying that history repeats itself. It does not, of course, mean that the same events take place a second time. But it does mean that similar situations arise and similar events do take place. Is it then to be wondered that the

federal idea, which found expression in the *Atharagarh Confederacy* many centuries ago, should again manifest itself in the form of the Eastern States Union ? There is another saying that the desires and aspirations of peoples manifest themselves as events and reality. Can it then be doubted that the reunity of the Sambalpur tract and of Koshal will be a reality through the Eastern States union, as that appears to be the general desire of the people ? On the contrary, would it not be poetic justice that the disintegration of the *Atharagarh Confederacy* of Koshal, that took place in the beginning of British rule, should give rise to a united Koshal in a bigger union of States towards the end of British rule ?

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